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The January Plenum: Gorbachev Draws the Battlelines

An Intelligence Assessment

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The January Plenum: Gorbachev Draws the Battlelines

An Intelligence Assessment

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April 1987

The January Plenum: Gorbachev Draws the Battlelines

Key Judgments

Information available as of 11 March 1987 was used in this report.

The battlelines between General Secretary Gorbachev and those resisting his initiatives were drawn more clearly at the long-delayed 27-28 January plenum of the CPSU Central Committee on personnel matters. Gorbachev moved out ahead of his Politburo colleagues to present a new, more radical agenda for change under the guise of a broad program of "democratization." The steps he has taken are polarizing the party, increasing the possibility of a political showdown over the next year.

Gorbachev is attempting to revitalize the country's institutional structure to smooth the way for the successful implementation of his economic reforms. He made clear that he has no intention of limiting the party's monopoly of political power or the top leadership's authority within the party. Rather, his proposals are intended to energize the system by mobilizing grassroots pressure against recalcitrant lower level officials and by giving the population a sense of participation in the political process.

At the plenum, Gorbachev began a full-court press to prevent his program from being buried in endless debate:

- In an effort to bypass the Central Committee on the controversial issue of party reform, he proposed that this be the subject of an extraordinary party conference next year—the first such gathering in almost 50 years.
- To force the party leadership to come to grips with the issue of economic reform, he announced that this would be the subject of the next plenum.
- To prevent local officials from suppressing criticism of their shortcomings, he called for legal guarantees for openness.
- To speed turnover of entrenched officials, he called for contested party elections with secret voting for posts up to the level of republic first secretary

Limits on Gorbachev's power were clearly evident at the plenum. The resolution adopted failed to endorse many of his key proposals—including the party conference and multicandidate elections. At the same time, the resolution made a firmer commitment to the need for a strong military than the General Secretary did. Gorbachev made no secret that his program is controversial, acknowledging that many think he is trying to make "too sharp a turn" but arguing that Soviet problems are sufficiently pressing to require strong medicine.

Gorbachev did not get all he wanted on the personnel front, but he succeeded in promoting several allies to positions just below the top level. His protege Aleksandr Yakovlev was made a candidate Politburo member, and Nikolay Slyunkov and Anatoliy Luk'yanov were added to the Secretariat. The plenum also removed former Kazakh leader Dinmukhamed Kunayev from the Politburo, further weakening the old guard.

Although most Politburo members agree on the need for change, there are increasing indications that some think he may be moving too far too fast. "Second Secretary" Yegor Ligachev, in particular, while not challenging Gorbachev directly, has in the past voiced skepticism about some of the reforms he proposed at the plenum.

Concern over Gorbachev's policies appears to be even deeper in the Central Committee. Many members feel their jobs and privileges are directly threatened, and many probably also fear the regime is beginning a process of liberalization that may get out of control. At the same time, Gorbachev appears to have a strong constituency among younger party members hoping to move rapidly ahead during this period of change, as well as those who grew tired of the ineptitude of his predecessors.

The plenum clearly demonstrated that Gorbachev now has the initiative and is strong enough politically to push openly for broad policy and systemic changes. By taking the offensive, however, he is heightening the risk of a direct clash with more conservative elements. The next year could be critical in his consolidation of power. His program and his own political future are more closely tied together than ever. By promising so much, Gorbachev has made his political survival dependent on his ability to deliver much—at a minimum, significant economic progress within the framework of continued political stability and at least a modicum of system reform to maintain his and the regime's credibility. His message—that there is "no other choice" but to march ahead since "we do not have anywhere to retreat to"—is now true for him personally if not for the USSR. To the extent that he succeeds in translating his proposals into policies, and to the extent that these policies produce the results he has promised, his political position will be strengthened. But he has left himself little room to temporize should his program encounter political difficulty.

Contents

	Page
Key Judgments	iii
Introduction	1
The Plenum's Delay	1
Gorbachev's Strategy—A Move Toward "Democratization"	2
Policy Directions	2
Ideology	3
Cadre Policy	4
Electoral Reform	5
The Party Conference	7
Economic Policy	8
Nationalities Policy	10
Cultural/Propaganda Policy	10
Legal Reforms	11
Military/Foreign Affairs	12
Policy Conflict	12
Limited Progress on Personnel Changes	13
The Road Ahead	17

The January Plenum: Gorbachev Draws the Battlelines

Introduction

The January Plenum just happens to be the plenum which gives an answer to the question: Are we to retreat, or are we not to retreat?

Gorbachev in Jurmala
18 February 1987

The January plenum, more than any other since Gorbachev's election as party leader in March 1985, was his own forum. For the first time he clearly stepped out in front of his Politburo colleagues to unleash a broad assault on those resisting his reform efforts in the form of a sweeping program for "democratizing" the Soviet system. While Gorbachev clearly does not have anything approaching a Western form of democracy in mind, by Soviet standards his proposals were radical. Some Soviet observers are likening the January plenum's importance to that of the 20th CPSU Congress in 1956 when Khrushchev made his secret speech denouncing Stalin. Although this is probably an overstatement, the plenum does appear to be a watershed in Gorbachev's drive to consolidate his power and to set forth his prescription for the changes he wants to introduce.

The Plenum's Delay

Differences within the leadership over Gorbachev's reform program reportedly caused the delay in convening the plenum. Gorbachev had initially announced in July 1986 that preparations for a plenum on personnel matters were under way, and Soviet [ ] said that the meeting would take place in October or November. As these dates slipped, there were increasing reports [ ] of sharp disagreements within the leadership, especially over Gorbachev's determination to set up a mechanism that would facilitate the removal of officials resisting his policies. After the plenum Gorbachev confirmed that preparations had been "difficult" and had necessitated three postponements—violating the party's rule requiring a plenum at least every six months

Gorbachev [ ] used the delay to put his personal stamp on the main report and to build support for his proposals. [ ] he rejected an initial draft of the speech that had been prepared by "Second Secretary" Ligachev and had it rewritten by his allies, party secretaries Yakovlev and Razumovskiy [ ] Ligachev had not wanted to go as far in revising cadre policy and that Gorbachev lobbied every member of the Central Committee in the weeks before the plenum to present his case.

[ ] there was a "major" clash at an expanded Politburo meeting on the eve of the plenum. [ ] one unnamed senior official called for Gorbachev's resignation but that Gorbachev was supported by a majority of the Politburo. At the time this meeting would have taken place, an allegorical article in a Soviet weekly alluded to tensions in the Politburo. The author described Lenin's concern in the 1920s about a "split" within the top leadership and pointed out similarities between that period and "what is happening today."

In the course of preparing for this critical plenum, Gorbachev appears to have radicalized his agenda and confronted his opposition directly. In the weeks before the plenum he moved decisively on a number of fronts, taking steps bound to antagonize more cautious elements in the party. These included:

- His personal role in the release of Andrey Sakharov from exile in Gor'kiy and the subsequent release of many other political prisoners.

- The publication in *Pravda* of the first direct criticism of Brezhnev by name.

- The replacement of Kazakh party boss Kunayev with an ethnic Russian.

- The apparent revision of 1987 economic plan targets, forcing some regional leaders to accept a negative rate of economic growth because of the dislocations anticipated from factory retooling and the rejection of manufactured goods that failed to meet new standards for quality.

Thus, by the time the plenum opened, the stage was set for a major Gorbachev push to advance a policy agenda more ambitious than even he had earlier advanced.

Gorbachev's Strategy—A Move Toward "Democratization"

In a lengthy opening address to the plenum, Gorbachev systematically repudiated the main lines of regime policy under Brezhnev and unveiled the most far-reaching program for change since the Khrushchev era. The central theme underlying his proposals was the need for "democratization." Under this banner, he called for new ideological approaches and political and economic reforms that could result in major systemic changes.

Gorbachev's assessment is that problems in the economic and political structure of the country are closely interdependent. He appears to believe that changes in the economic mechanism cannot be implemented without simultaneously undertaking institutional reforms, and that in any event economic progress alone is insufficient to bring about the broad revitalization of the party and the society. He believes that this revitalization is needed for the regime to maintain its power and legitimacy at home and for the country to develop as a modern state capable of competing effectively in the international arena.

Gorbachev's speech suggests that he is attempting to make his reform course "irreversible" by discrediting the system inherited from Brezhnev so thoroughly that it would be impossible to turn back the clock. He probably hopes his program will have strong appeal within the country as a whole, that the support it commands will make it difficult for his opponents within the elite to block his initiatives, and that pressures on the elite "from below" may even provide an insurance policy against his removal. Thus, Gorbachev probably believes that a reform strategy is desirable from the standpoint both of the country's needs and of his own political interests.

Presumably, it was such an assessment that led Gorbachev to embark on the bold course he took at the plenum. He no doubt realized that drawing the lines of battle more clearly would increase the possibility of a political showdown over the next year or so, but he calculated that the alternative was to see his separate initiatives get bogged down in a bureaucratic resistance that would ultimately undermine him politically.

Policy Directions

Gorbachev evidently expects "democratization" to serve his broad strategic objectives in several ways:

- *Political.* Gorbachev hopes that broadening the arena of political discussion and policy debate will enable him to circumvent the bureaucracy and to mobilize lower level support against officials who are resisting his reforms.

- *Social.* The "democratization" program would give Gorbachev a powerful tool for combating alienation and arresting the erosion of the system's legitimacy. He evidently wants to activate and rally previously passive segments of the population and to reengage the intelligentsia, whose support will be critical to his revitalization efforts.

- *Economic.* Gorbachev has made clear that openness and freer discussion of economic and social problems are necessary to formulate solutions and prevent repetition of past economic mistakes. "Democratization" in the workplace, he hopes, would reduce cynicism among the workers, convince them that they have a stake in the system, and encourage them to work enthusiastically for his reforms.

- *International.* His program would help improve the Soviet Union's image abroad. Although Gorbachev's "democratization" effort appears to be aimed primarily at domestic concerns, he no doubt hopes that it will pay a public relations dividend that will allow the Soviet Union to better refute claims of human rights abuses and become a more attractive model for Western Communists and the Third World and a more suitable trade partner.

Despite the far-reaching nature of Gorbachev's proposals, there are clear limits to how far he is willing to go. He made it clear that there will be no breakup of the current political system or diminution of the role of the CPSU—his proposals do not allow for the existence of other parties. He indicated that the party would continue to supervise public affairs, asserting that guiding "the creative activity of the masses" was the party's paramount duty. He stressed that "control from below" will supplement, not replace, control from above, emphasizing that decisions of higher party bodies—even on personnel matters—will continue to be binding on lower ones. He emphasized that the party would not tolerate "permissiveness, irresponsibility, or anarchy" (codewords for Western civil liberties), calling instead for an "organic combination of democracy and discipline."

Even if all of Gorbachev's proposals should be accepted, there is wide room for interpretation on how they would be implemented. The scope for genuine popular initiative could be so narrowly limited and controlled by the party apparatus that implementation would make little practical difference. If controls over the "democratization" process are too obvious and restrictive, however, they would be counterproductive and probably increase the very skepticism and alienation the process is intended to overcome

Ideology

Gorbachev's remarks reflected a desire to revive ideology as an instrument of change rather than an impediment to it. He tried to legitimize his reforms by arguing that opposition to his policies is in violation of true Leninism. He said Lenin's ideas are being interpreted "simplistically" and that a rigidity of thinking had led to "deviations" on such basic matters as self-government, economic management, and socialist property. He argued that current problems stemmed in large part from a failure to update theoretical concepts of socialism that were formed in the 1930s and 1940s. The authorities, he said, had permitted only "scholastic theorizing" that had no practical applications while discouraging "constructive analysis" and the formulation of new ideas. By attacking past deviations from Leninism, Gorbachev seemed to be underscoring his intention to break with the traditions and policies of the past 50 years, while depicting his own reform proposals as a return to Lenin's ideas.

By criticizing the theories of the 1930s and 1940s, Gorbachev implicitly criticized Stalinism and signaled his interest in resuming the de-Stalinization process begun by Khrushchev, but brought to a halt under Brezhnev. He clearly blamed Stalin for the stagnation of ideology, saying that because of "well-known circumstance," debate disappeared and "authoritarian evaluations" became "unquestioned truths." Although Gorbachev did not mention Stalin by name, [redacted] Gorbachev was trying to "bring the 20th Party Congress (where Khrushchev delivered his speech denouncing Stalin's crimes) forward to the present day." Since the plenum, there has been increasingly frank discussion in the Soviet press of the mistakes of the Stalin era

Resistance. Gorbachev's efforts to reinterpret the ideological underpinnings of the regime are sure to raise concerns among party conservatives. They will view the reevaluation of party history as a risky undertaking, because it has the unintended consequence of surfacing questions about the party's stewardship and its claims to legitimacy as the supreme

arbiter of popular interests. Their concerns were apparently responsible for the failure of the plenum's final resolution to pick up on Gorbachev's references to mistakes of the Stalin era.

Gorbachev's more flexible approach to ideology is causing particular concern among more orthodox East European officials [redacted] top Czechoslovak and East German officials accused the Soviets of "revisionism" at a high-level Bloc ideology conference shortly after the plenum. Party secretary Yakovlev, who attended the session, responded that this was better than "dogmatism."

Cadre Policy

Although Gorbachev did not—as many reports suggested he might—propose specific forced retirement measures at the plenum, he spoke out forcefully for more rapid personnel turnover at all levels and emphasized that party workers must be held to higher performance standards. He said the "stagnation" in the Politburo and Secretariat led to a "weakening" in their ability to work, and he argued that the "top echelons" of the party and state leadership must be kept "open for an influx of fresh forces." He complained that many officials at lower levels kept their jobs "for decades," producing negative consequences for the entire country. He said that national-level managers must never again be allowed, out of a misplaced sense of kindness or excessive tolerance, to keep their jobs despite being unable to cope with their responsibilities. He expressed his concern that party committees running in the "old ways" are still "widespread."

In what would be a major departure from the personnel policies of the Brezhnev era, Gorbachev called for an end to the practice of appointing party officials with technical backgrounds. He said this bias has "deformed" the party's staff and drawn it too deeply into the minutiae of economic management.

Gorbachev went so far as to advocate greater opportunities for individuals who are not party members to advance to top-level positions in the economy. He argued that to deny talented nonparty people promotions to key positions is a violation of their constitutional rights. He acknowledged that this is a highly contentious issue but said that he thinks those who oppose it are in "error."

Since the most important posts in the Soviet Union are all party positions, which by definition are not open to nonparty people, Gorbachev's proposal would not result in any significant diminution of the party's political power. But it could imply that he wants either to reduce the number of jobs outside the party whose occupants are selected by party committees, or to expand the list of people from which the party fills these positions to include some individuals who are not party members. Until now, making party membership a prerequisite for advancement beyond a certain level in many occupations has been a major means by which the party ensured the at least nominal allegiance of professional and technical elites.

Resistance. [redacted] before the plenum that Gorbachev was seeking a mandatory retirement age for party officials of 65 or 70 and that this idea was meeting strong resistance. The introduction of a mandatory retirement age of 65 for Academy of Science officials on the eve of the plenum was a further indication that similar measures may have been under consideration within the party. Gorbachev also [redacted] wanted a policy that would make it easier to move senior officials temporarily to less prestigous "trouble-shooting" assignments to straighten out problems. His failure to mention such changes indicated he was unable to marshal strong support for them.

Second Secretary Ligachev, in particular, appears to be opposed to a mandatory retirement rule. During a trip to Siberia last May, he said that the idea of "strictly limiting" the terms of leading officials had been raised on the eve of the 27th Congress but argued that this was a poor idea, since many officials work well at the same post for many years and that "results," not the "calendar," should determine their tenure

Although Gorbachev may not have been wedded to a mandatory retirement age, he is apparently seeking some sort of formal mechanism for forcing out ineffective officials. Tough measures have recently been adopted by his allies in Moscow and Kazakhstan (see inset), and Gorbachev is probably after some similar mechanism for the CPSU. A month after the plenum the Politburo approved a proposal for limited measures along these lines for some state officials. Even this approach would be highly controversial, and some Politburo members may have opposed it, along with Central Committee members who feared they would lose their jobs.

The controversial nature of Gorbachev's view on personnel matters was reflected by the failure of the plenum resolution to include many of his key points. His sharpest references—for example, to timely replacement of Politburo members and the inadmissibility of protecting incompetent senior executives—were softened or dropped in the resolution. It is possible or even likely that he expected this but wanted to take the opportunity to throw down a marker on the issue.

Electoral Reform

The most specific and potentially far-reaching measures Gorbachev proposed to "democratize" the system and promote cadre turnover were major changes in procedures for selecting party and state officials. He argued that such measures would increase their accountability, providing a new and important check from "below" on their performance

Under Brezhnev electoral reform was occasionally discussed in Soviet academic literature but did not appear to be taken seriously by the leadership. Under Gorbachev this discussion has increased, particularly during the public debate of the new party rules that were adopted at last year's 27th Congress. In the weeks prior to the plenum, high-level interest in electoral reform was signaled by Soviet press publicity on several contested elections for leadership posts in the Komsomol.

On the party side, Gorbachev called for reforming the procedures for electing officials, including the first secretary at the republic level and below, to allow any number of candidates. He specified that the elections should be by "secret" ballot. Gorbachev qualified his proposal by saying that the decisions of higher party bodies would continue to be binding in personnel matters. He was more vague about the top leadership, saying only that there should be further "democratization" of the "central leadership bodies"—the Politburo, Secretariat, and Central Committee.

If fully implemented, Gorbachev's proposals would bring about major changes in the way the party conducts its elections. Multiple candidates are technically permitted by the party rules, but since the 1920s such instances have been extremely rare. Although party members can vote against the official candidate, most elections are carried out by a show of hands rather than secret ballot, making it difficult to cast a negative vote.

Some indication of how contested elections might work was provided by Soviet press accounts of a contest for a regional *(rayon)* party first secretary in Kemerovo Province in February that was carried out in the spirit of the plenum. While this process was controlled by higher level officials—they selected the two candidates—members of the local party committee debated their merits and in a close vote (29 to 20) picked their new leader. The accounts indicated that this was only an experiment and that new procedures had not yet been worked out. The provincial leader who oversaw the process said in future elections candidates should make more of an effort to present their own "electoral platforms." He indicated that if higher level officials decided an "outsider" should be brought in, this person should serve for a period before having to stand for election.

Gorbachev was more vague on state (Supreme Soviet) electoral reform. He said that there should be broader discussion of candidates and a review of current electoral procedures. He noted that a new electoral law should be drafted this year and published for public debate but left the details unclear. One Soviet legal scholar said in an *Izvestiya* interview that a debate was now going on over the extent of possible

Retirement Mechanisms in Kazakhstan and Moscow

Two close Gorbachev allies in Kazakhstan and Moscow have recently introduced tough measures to get rid of ineffective officials. Party leaders Gennadiy Kolbin and Boris Yel'tsin—and a number of local officials elsewhere—have initiated a systematic "certification" (attestatsiya) of their party organizations to remove those who fail to measure up to the demands of their positions. Certification provides them with a retirement mechanism that is much stronger than measures available to Gorbachev over the CPSU as a whole.

Kolbin, who was involved in a similar process while second secretary in Georgia and first secretary in Ul'yanovsk oblast, has put forward specific guidelines for Kazakhstan and has moved quickly to implement certification there. It requires every official below the republic secretariat or bureau level to undergo a biannual appraisal of his performance by specially constituted certification commissions. The commissions' recommendations are recorded by the Kazakh cadre department and then must be endorsed by the secretariat or bureau. As head of these two bodies, Kolbin has the right to final approval of these recommendations, giving him an effective tool for removing recalcitrant officials. The first bureau-level review was reported in the press in early January, and, while the middle-level official under scrutiny was approved in his position, the bureau noted that he failed "to set a personal example of vigorous questioning and imaginative approaches" in his duties.

At the Kazakh plenum in January, Kolbin announced that the certification of the highest level officials—Central Committee members, republic ministers, and department heads—will begin in March. Moreover, he has put his party organization on notice that those who do not measure up will be reassigned or dismissed.

Since becoming Moscow party chief in December 1985, Yel'tsin has carried out a large-scale purge of officials at all levels. He announced at the July 1986 Moscow gorkom plenum that a certification campaign was already under way in the city party organization. Although there are few details on certification in Moscow, the dismissals of over a quarter of Moscow's district first secretaries and several high officials since the announcement suggest Yel'tsin is using certification to continue the removal of "time-servers" who are "not in accord with their posts."

reforms and that possibilities ranged from "minor" adjustments to "radical" changes that would require an amendment of the 1977 Constitution. The interviewer said one of the more radical reforms under consideration is the competition of several candidates for each post

Gorbachev apparently hopes he can use such reforms to put pressure on officials to follow his policy lines. The proposed changes could enable him to enforce discipline better by using the implicit threat of running other candidates against recalcitrant officials. By use of the secret ballot, he presumably hopes that it would be more difficult for local party bosses to control elections and ensure that no challenge to them developed from within the rank and file. Gorbachev [redacted] has indicated that he believes the expansion of inner-party "democracy" is needed to restore dynamism to the one-party state

Resistance. Gorbachev's proposals on electoral reform appear to be highly controversial. Although the plenum resolution endorsed the need for "democratizing" both the party and state electoral process in general terms, it did not include Gorbachev's specific proposals such as secret ballots and multicandidate elections. Gorbachev specifically appeared to differ with Second Secretary Ligachev on the question of

secret party elections. In the debate preceeding the 27th Congress, Ligachev wrote that open elections are preferable to secret balloting (see inset).

The Party Conference

To approve party electoral reforms and "democratization" measures, Gorbachev proposed convening an extraordinary party conference in 1988—the first such meeting since 1941. He specified the conference should take place before next year's scheduled elections of all party officials up to the province level, thus setting the stage for most party officials—including many members of the CPSU Central Committee—to face electoral contests in the near future.

Gorbachev's proposal for the conference was a political master stroke. Since he could not get the January plenum to approve the tough personnel measures he was after, the proposal allowed him additional time to build support both in the Politburo and the party as a whole. It also allowed the plenum to take place without the appearance that Gorbachev had failed to achieve his objectives in personnel policy. Finally, it may be possible for Gorbachev to manipulate the composition of the party conference so that it will be a more compliant body than the Central Committee.

It is unclear who will attend the conference. Delegates to the 27th Party Congress last year could be recalled—a practice used recently in similar East European party conferences [redacted] new delegates would be elected, giving Gorbachev a chance to get a group more in line with his views. In his concluding remarks to the plenum, Gorbachev said the Politburo would prepare proposals for a future plenum to determine the date and procedure for holding the conference.

The party rules give the party leadership considerable leeway, saying only that the Central Committee may convene a conference "to discuss pressing party policy issues," and that it determines the procedures for holding the conference. Previous party conferences have had wide authority to direct party affairs. Conferences in 1921, 1922, and 1929, for example, adopted new party rules, approved major policy changes such as the New Economic Policy and the first five-year plan, and ordered a purge of the party membership. Gorbachev may use such precedents to argue that next year's conference should also have a broad mandate. No matter how narrowly its authority is defined, according to the party rules a conference is a more authoritative body than a Central Committee plenum

Electoral Contests in Eastern Europe

State electoral reforms were recently introduced in Poland and Hungary, with multiple candidates running against each other. While the candidates favored by the party leadership have not won in every case, the experiences in Poland and Hungary indicate that the authorities usually can still have a decisive role in determining the election outcomes. In both countries, places in the Parliament are reserved for top leaders who do not have to run for contested seats.

The electoral process is particularly tightly controlled in Poland. There the authorities reserve the right to make the final choice of two candidates and place the name of the favored candidate at the top of the ballot. If no name is checked off on the ballot, which happens in many cases, the name at the top gets the vote, usually ensuring a win for the official candidate.

Under Hungary's system, adopted in 1983, the authorities have less control over the selection and election of candidates. There, additional candidates can be proposed from the floor at nomination meetings and be listed on the ballot if they receive enough support. Under this arrangement, Hungarian authorities have sometimes resorted to packing nomination meetings to prevent candidates from appearing on the ballot. Candidates are listed alphabetically on the ballot, and voters are instructed to indicate a preference for a particular candidate, rather than choose one by default as happens in Poland.

There have been some indications that the conference may revise the party rules that were adopted last year at the 27th CPSU Congress. These rules may have to be amended to implement some of the measures Gorbachev is proposing. At a briefing for foreign ambassadors, a Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman said that whereas a plenum lacks the authority to change party rules, a party conference can change them if it is so empowered. [redacted] has in fact said this would be the case. [redacted] conference would take place but said that only a congress can amend the rules, suggesting that the authority of the conference is under debate.

The conference could also be used to alter the composition of the Central Committee. Although the rules are also unclear on this, past party conferences have removed members and promoted some candidates to full membership. [redacted] claimed that Gorbachev intends to make some changes along these lines. If this does happen, it could make the Central Committee easier for Gorbachev to manage.

The conference appears to be an attempt to make an end run around the Central Committee. The conference is likely to be an extremely large body—possibly on the order of the 5,000 delegates to a party congress—and it will be extremely difficult for such a large body to do much more than ratify the proposals offered by the party leadership. Gorbachev is apparently hoping he can use the conference to approve proposals that would be difficult to get through the Central Committee.

Resistance. Gorbachev's idea of a party conference is clearly controversial. He was careful to specify that it was his own proposal rather than the Politburo's. Many members of the Central Committee whose positions could be put in jeopardy by a new electoral law are likely to be opposed to the measures proposed by Gorbachev. Although he indicated in his closing remarks that speakers at the plenum and other members of the Central Committee endorsed the idea, the resolution adopted by the plenum failed to mention the conference. Although it may be difficult to block the conference now that discussion is under way, the remarks of the *Pravda* official suggest conservatives may be trying to limit its authority.

Economic Policy

Gorbachev used his plenum speech to reaffirm his determination to overcome resistance to his efforts to "restructure" the Soviet economy and to push for further economic reforms. To assure that economic reform remains a top priority, he announced that it would be the subject of the next Central Committee plenum. In an apparent effort to force the party to come to grips with these issues in the next several months, during a mid-February trip to the Baltic he announced that the plenum would take place in June; it is highly unusual for the date of a Central Committee plenum to be set so far in advance.

Gorbachev laid much of the blame for the Soviet Union's current economic difficulties on the Stalinist legacy of a strictly "command" economy. "Simplistic" misinterpretations of Lenin's ideas, he said, had led to a number of mistakes—a leveling of wages, micromanagement by state planners, restrictions on the rights of enterprises, misconceptions about individual labor activities, and a disdainful attitude toward cooperatives. These mistakes had the effect of undermining both the material and "moral" incentive to work, he complained, and the economy had suffered as a result.

To help correct these problems, Gorbachev called for:

- The expanded use of cooperatives—member-run organizations outside the state sector—to help meet the growing demand for consumer goods and services.
- Nationwide discussion of a draft law designed to protect enterprises from undue interference by central authorities and providing for the "democratic" election of enterprise managers and greater participation by workers in management decisions (see inset).
- Convocation of the first congress of collective farmers since 1969 to revise the collective farm charter, presumably along lines that would further "democratize" farm management.

The Draft Law on State Enterprises

The draft law on state enterprises, which the plenum approved for nationwide discussion, reflects Gorbachev's determination to increase the role of the enterprises and limit that of the ministries in day-to-day enterprise management. The draft presumably will be somewhat amended before its planned adoption as law at the next Supreme Soviet session—probably this spring. As currently written, however, its language is sufficiently broad to make its impact dependent on how its provisions are ultimately implemented. For example, the draft gives enterprises the right to make decisions on "all production and social questions" that are not expressly precluded by law, while specifying that the ministries can exercise only those powers expressly granted by law. At the same time, however, the ministries are enjoined to closely "monitor" enterprise activities—a function that in the past has led to micromanagement. Although the draft law provides the enterprises with mechanisms for redress when the ministries overstep their bounds, the burden of proof will be on the enterprises, and it remains to be seen whether they will risk so openly challenging their superiors.

The draft also responds to Gorbachev's plenum proposal for increased worker participation in enterprise management and the "democratic" election of managers. The new law provides for the election of enterprise directors for five-year terms and lower level managers for two- or three-year terms at regularly scheduled meetings of workers. Under the current 1965 law, managers are appointed by state authorities. Between these meetings, the workers' interests are to be represented by an elected "labor collective's council," which is to operate primarily in an advisory capacity but also is to have some decisionmaking authority in the use of enterprise funds. The actual procedures for making decisions, such as selecting the candidates for management positions and setting the agenda for workers' meetings, are left unspecified in the new draft law.

The best known Soviet experiment in the election of enterprise managers—at the Lenin Machine-Building Plant in Voronezh—suggests that the party, which the draft law says will "guide the work of the entire collective and its self-management organs," will continue to play a strong role in the decisionmaking process. At the Voronezh plant, a selection commission is formed from representatives of the party, trade union, Komsomol, plant management, and leading production workers, but the composition of the commission must be approved by the plant's party committee. The commission selects its nominee by secret ballot and then passes its recommendation to the plant's party committee, which in turn sends its recommendation to enterprise management.

The clear intent of Gorbachev's efforts is to give Soviet workers a greater sense of participation in management decisions and, hence, of their own responsibility for enterprise performance. As *Izvestiya* noted in a postplenum editorial, workers will no longer be able to blame their poor performance on a poor leader, "because they will have elected him themselves." At the same time, Gorbachev's speech made it clear that he has no desire to push this process too far and that his intent is to enhance—not to weaken—the principle of "one-man management" of enterprises.

Gorbachev noted with some pride the economic results of 1986 but pointed out continued shortcomings in agriculture, capital construction, consumer goods output, and, most seriously, the machine-building sector. He reemphasized the latter's critical role in his modernization program and warned that "the Politburo will keep constant watch" over the machine-building sector.

Resistance. Gorbachev evidently felt it was necessary to restate his determination to "restructure" the economy because, as he admitted, the resistance to his efforts was proving even more "deeply rooted" than he anticipated. Many people, he complained, were either actively impeding his efforts or waiting for others—"somewhere higher up"—to reorganize their work before doing so themselves. He explained that he felt it necessary to reiterate his endorsement for the formation of cooperatives because "all sorts of obstacles" were being put in their way. To illustrate how difficult it was to force managers to adopt new methods and techniques, he cited the recent introduction of a state quality control system, which he said had caused work stoppages in protest, at Soviet factories.[1]

The party leadership has received "thousands" of letters from Soviet plant managers saying that Gorbachev's "restructuring" proposals are making matters worse and asking that no further changes be made in the economic mechanism.

Nationalities Policy

In his first public reference to the mid-December 1986 riots in Kazakhstan, Gorbachev called for a reassessment of Soviet nationalities policies. Stressing the need for "tact" in dealing with nationality problems, he was sharply critical of those who have pretended problems did not exist, taking too "upbeat a view" of the situation. Gorbachev's remarks suggest that the Alma-Ata disturbances have caused him to begin rethinking tactical approaches in his drive to arrest the erosion of Moscow's leverage over entrenched elites in non-Russian republics.

At the same time, Gorbachev reaffirmed the need for strong central control over the national republics. He was sharply critical of the "parochialism," "ethnic isolation," and "ethnic arrogance" that produced incidents like the one at Alma-Ata. Suggesting that he will take a tougher line with local officials who allow such tendencies to develop, he accused unnamed local party and government leaders of "shirking" their responsibilities by allowing ethnic tensions to flare up. He made clear that there will be "no loosening" up on those who flirt with "nationalistic or chauvinistic prejudices" and that the economic concerns of the entire country will take priority over regional interest.

Resistance. Gorbachev's determination to reassert central authority over the national republics is causing resentment among regional officials, who during the Brezhnev years became accustomed to operating with a high degree of independence. These concerns were heightened in many areas by the installation of a Russian with no previous ties to the republic as the new leader of Kazakhstan. In fact, the intensity and timing of the riots in Kazakhstan may have been one factor contributing to the delay of the plenum to enable the leadership to rethink its cadre policy concerning the non-Russians.

There were some suggestions of differences over nationality policy at the plenum. The plenum resolution called for the "exchange of cadres between republics," closely following the formulation used on this subject by Second Secretary Ligachev in his speech to the 27th CPSU Congress last year. Gorbachev, by contrast, said nothing about this subject in his speech and stated that the composition of cadres at all levels should reflect the national structure of the region—suggesting an effort to placate the minorities.

Cultural/Propaganda Policy

Gorbachev made it clear that the regime's promotion of greater openness is an integral part of his "democratization" effort. It is apparent that he is counting on press criticism as an additional means of bypassing the traditional bureaucratic chain of command to keep tabs on officials who may be resisting his

[1] Under this new system, which was introduced at 1,500 plants earlier this year, quality control is maintained by representatives of a State Acceptance Service, rather than the factory itself. Its more stringent standards are expected to initially produce a higher rejection rate, which may improve product quality but will also make it more difficult for a factory to reach its planned output targets. Although *Izvestiya* had earlier reported on the "stormy protests" that greeted the system's introduction at the Kama truck plant, Gorbachev's remark was the first high-level admission that these protests had included work stoppages—and that they had occurred at more than one plant.

program. He insisted that "the people should know everything," because openness and self-criticism are "precisely the means" of protecting the party from "errors in politics." Gorbachev spoke out strongly on some now-familiar themes, underscoring *glasnost* as a leitmotiv of his program to indoctrinate and mobilize the population behind his restructuring of the Soviet society and economy. He attacked local publications for foot-dragging on *glasnost* and complained that "many" party committees "continue paralyzing" the media's efforts.

Gorbachev indicated that he wants to help protect journalists who criticize officials subverting his policies or violating new performance standards he is setting. In conjunction with his proposals to revamp the legal system, he stated that "evidently the time has come to begin elaborating legal acts guaranteeing openness." In this way, he probably hopes to raise protective barriers for whistle-blowers and investigative reporters, to shield them from the wrath of local economic and party bosses.

Resistance. Gorbachev's openness policy came in for some criticism at the plenum. According to an article published in the Soviet press by a Central Committee member, several speakers at the plenum suggested that the franker discussion of issues in the Soviet press was giving ammunition to the enemies of the Soviet Union and was being used for personal vendettas.

[redacted] there were sharp differences over openness at the plenum. [redacted] President Gromyko spoke out sharply against recent press criticism, saying that it was "uncontrolled," "irresponsible," and undermining popular confidence in the party [redacted] although Ligachev did not give a formal speech at the plenum, he spoke out in the corridors during the meeting against what he saw as abuse of *glasnost*

Legal Reforms

For his "democratization" efforts to succeed, Gorbachev will need to build the image of an effective and impartial legal system that can protect the rights of citizens as well as those of the state. His speech suggested an intention to restore the integrity of the law enforcement system, which during the Brezhnev years became notoriously corrupt. He said that "there can be no real democracy outside the law or above the law. . . . Real democracy serves every person, protecting his political and social rights." He highlighted two major interrelated aims: (1) strengthening the continuing law-and-order campaign while (2) increasing the protection of individual rights against abuses of authority by public officials.

Gorbachev's remarks reinforced recent signs of growing leadership interest in reforming the Soviet legal system and overhauling criminal and civil legislation. In addition to calling for new legislation to guarantee openness by critics of state and public organs, he stressed the need to increase the role and prestige of Soviet courts, to assure the independence of judges, and to eliminate transgressions of the procuracy, militia, and other law enforcement organs. One such law, now in draft, mentioned by Gorbachev would allow citizens to file complaints with the courts against official malfeasance. Other legal reforms called for in a November 1986 Central Committee decree are intended to eliminate biased and careless investigations and court proceedings, as well as arrests. We have received conflicting testimony about whether the expected revision would significantly change the law most commonly used against political offenders.

Events inside and outside the plenum indicate the leadership is taking seriously the need to promulgate legal guarantees for openness and to reassess the roles of the various legal organs. Numerous personnel changes and exposed cases of official malfeasance have occurred at the national and republic ministries of internal affairs and the Ministries of Justice and the Procuracy. New laws to allow citizens to bring officials to court and to amend civil law are part of the legislative plan outlined by the Soviet Government in September 1986 for scheduled promulgation in early 1987

Some of Gorbachev's moves indicate he may be trying to use his "democratization" campaign to increase his control over the KGB. Such an intent was suggested by KGB chief Chebrikov's recent unprecedented public acknowledgment of wrongdoing by one of his subordinates in the Ukraine and statement that the KGB would operate within the law

Resistance. Many midlevel and even top officials in party organs and law enforcement agencies, including the KGB, are likely to be threatened by Gorbachev's apparent intention to make the administration of justice more equitable and the use of police power less arbitrary. If implemented, the measures he is proposing could subject their activities to much closer scrutiny, diminish their power, and give rise to concerns about their ability to deal effectively with internal security threats. Many KGB officials may be wary of the consequences of releasing large numbers of political prisoners, and some [redacted] see the rebuke of the Ukrainian KGB official as indicating a move to rein in the KGB.

Soviet spokesman Gennadiy Gerasimov, when discussing the pardons granted and the review of prisoners' sentences, alluded to a debate by saying that while "there is a tendency nowadays" toward "softening" the laws, "some comrades think the stricter it is, the better."

Military/Foreign Affairs

Gorbachev's speech at the plenum devoted little attention to foreign or military affairs. In discussing the need to "strengthen defense" he focused on the human factor, saying that military personnel should upgrade their skills and improve their combat readiness, and calling for improved diplomatic efforts.

Resistance. There were hints of concern at the plenum that Gorbachev is not making a sufficient commitment to defense. In contrast to Gorbachev's brief remarks, the plenum resolution contained a much sharper formulation, citing the "striving of the hawk-like imperialist forces of the US to break military-strategic parity and achieve nuclear superiority," and calling for a "comprehensive strengthening of defenses." This strong language is particularly striking because on most other issues the resolution softened Gorbachev's language. A number of speakers at the plenum are involved in national security issues—Defense Minister Sokolov, USA Institute head Arbatov, President Gromyko, and Ambassador to West Germany Kvitsinskiy—suggesting that this may have been a subject for discussion at the plenum

Since the plenum Gorbachev has stressed the need to keep a lid on defense spending, further adding to the impression that he is out in front of other leaders on this issue. At the trade union congress in mid-February, for example, he said the Soviet leadership is taking all steps needed to ensure Soviet national security but that it will not go a "single step" beyond the requirements of a "sensible, sufficient defense."

Policy Conflict

By all accounts Gorbachev's speech sparked a heated debate at the plenum. One participant describing the plenum commented that it was unusually lively and that "clashes of opinion" took place. Privately some [redacted] very sharp conflicts erupted during the discussions and that some of the basic elements of Gorbachev's program, particularly *glasnost*, were called into question

The official record of the plenum left little doubt that sharp differences did occur. Although Gorbachev was careful to indicate that many of his remarks had the endorsement of the Politburo, in other places it was clear that the proposals he was offering were his own. Gorbachev alluded to opposition, complaining that "some comrades" find it difficult to understand the importance of "democratization."

The contrast between Gorbachev's views and those of the Politburo as a whole was evident in the failure of the resolution adopted by the plenum to include many of his key points and that it used much more ambiguous language in supporting others (see inset). The

Differences Between Gorbachev's Speech and the Plenum Resolution

	Speech	Resolution
Democratization	"Democratization is the guarantee that the process of transformations that we have started will be continued to the end."	"Effective, conscientious work by all without exception is the guarantee of success in reorganization."
Cadre policy	Timely replacement of Politburo and Secretariat members to avoid the stagnation that occurred in the past.	Timely replacement at all levels starting from the Central Committee.
	An end to the practice of protecting "executives who cannot cope with their duties."	Softened Gorbachev's language: "genuine care for cadres has nothing to do with complacency, condonation, charity..."
Electoral reform	Election of party officials via secret ballot and multiple candidacies at republic, kray, and oblast level.	Cited the need "to improve the mechanism of the formation of elective party bodies at all levels."
Party conference	Called for an all-Union party conference in 1988.	Not mentioned.
Nationalities policy	No mention of interrepublic exchange of cadres.	"It is necessary to intensify exchanges of cadres between republics and regions and between local and central bodies . . . "
Ideology	"The theoretical concepts of socialism have remained to a large extent at the level of the 1930s and 1940s . . . vigorous debates and creative ideas disappeared from theory and the social sciences while authoritarian evaluations and opinions became unquestionable truths . . . "	No allusion to the Stalin issue.
Culture/propaganda	Called for legal guarantees for *glasnost*.	Not mentioned.
Foreign affairs and defense	Called for Soviet military to upgrade their skills and increase combat readiness of all arms and services.	Cited the efforts of "hawklike imperialist forces of the US to break the military strategic parity and to achieve nuclear superiority" and called for a "comprehensive strengthening of the defense of our country."

resolution added language pointing out that "democratization" must take place in a manner that "serves society" and "strengthens law and order." In his closing speech, Gorbachev appeared to be addressing fears that "democratization" could unleash forces beyond the control of the party, saying that a "powerful party" and a "loyal people" would be able to deal with anyone who tried to use "democratization" for selfish and antisocial purposes

Limited Progress on Personnel Changes

Although personnel moves at the plenum added up to a definite plus for Gorbachev, he got less than he was after. The plenum demonstrated that he has a much freer hand in the Secretariat than in the Politburo. With the latest changes, he has almost completely reshaped the Secretariat since becoming party leader, but only half of the Politburo members attained their positions under Gorbachev (see inset, page 14)

On the Politburo, Gorbachev further reduced the strength of the old guard by removing Dinmukhamed Kunayev. But he failed to secure the promotion to full membership of his ally, Moscow party boss Yel'tsin, a move he clearly wanted to make. [redacted] reported before the plenum that Yel'tsin was slated

Gorbachev's New Secretariat

Since becoming General Secretary in March 1985, Gorbachev has almost completely remade the Secretariat, filling its ranks with his allies:

Secretary	Appointed	Responsibilities
Full Politburo		
Mikhail Gorbachev	November 1978	General Secretary
Yegor Ligachev	December 1983	Second secretary; personnel and ideology
Lev Zaykov	July 1985	Economy
Candidate Politburo		
Vladimir Dolgikh	December 1972	Heavy industry and energy
Yuriy Slyun'kov	January 1987	Economy
Aleksandr Yakovlev	March 1986	Culture and ideology
Others		
Aleksandra Biryukova	March 1986	Light industry and consumer goods
Anatoliy Dobrynin	March 1986	Foreign policy
Anatoliy Luk'yanov	January 1987	General Department; defense industry and security
Vadim Medvedev	March 1986	Relations with socialist countries
Viktor Nikonov	April 1985	Agriculture
Georgiy Razumovskiy	March 1986	Personnel

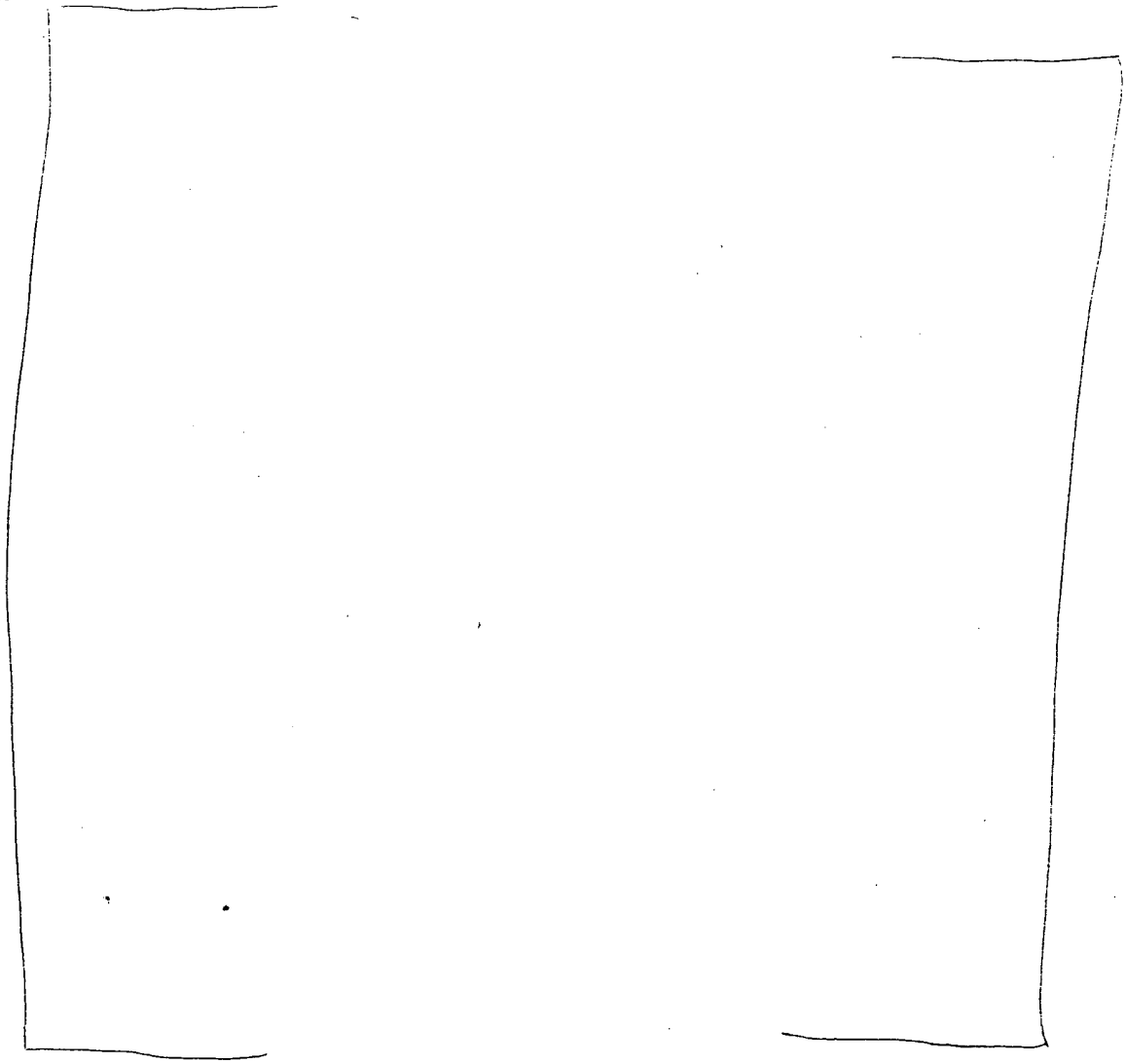
for promotion, a status that was accorded his predecessor in Moscow, Viktor Grishin. Yel'tsin's exclusion from full membership at this time suggests reluctance among the top leadership to allow one of the most dynamic and forceful proponents of Gorbachev's reforms into their ranks. The difficulty Gorbachev is having adding full Politburo members is underscored by the fact that no one has been promoted to that status since the Party Congress last March

Party secretary Aleksandr Yakovlev, a trusted adviser to Gorbachev, was elevated to candidate membership. Yakovlev's promotion will enhance Gorbachev's authority on matters of culture and ideology, which Yakovlev oversees, and help limit the power wielded by Second Secretary Ligachev in those areas. Other Gorbachev supporters rumored to be in line for promotion to candidate membership in the Politburo—including Dobrynin and Razumovskiy—failed to advance.

The addition to the Secretariat of Belorussian party boss Slyun'kov and General Department chief Luk'yanov strengthened Gorbachev's already dominant position in that institution. The retirement of science and education secretary Zimyanin leaves Vladimir Dolgikh as the last remaining Brezhnev appointee—other than Gorbachev himself—on the Secretariat. With the addition of Slyun'kov, Dolgikh's responsibilities in the economic sphere are likely to be reduced.

Slyun'kov has been a strong advocate of innovative economic methods and as Belorussian party leader helped promote a number of economic experiments. He was reportedly handpicked by Premier Ryzhkov—with whom he worked in Gosplan. With his economic planning experience, Slyun'kov may be the most likely candidate to fill the vacant post of chief of the party's Economic Department. His move out of Belorussia has also allowed Gorbachev to name a supporter to replace him there.

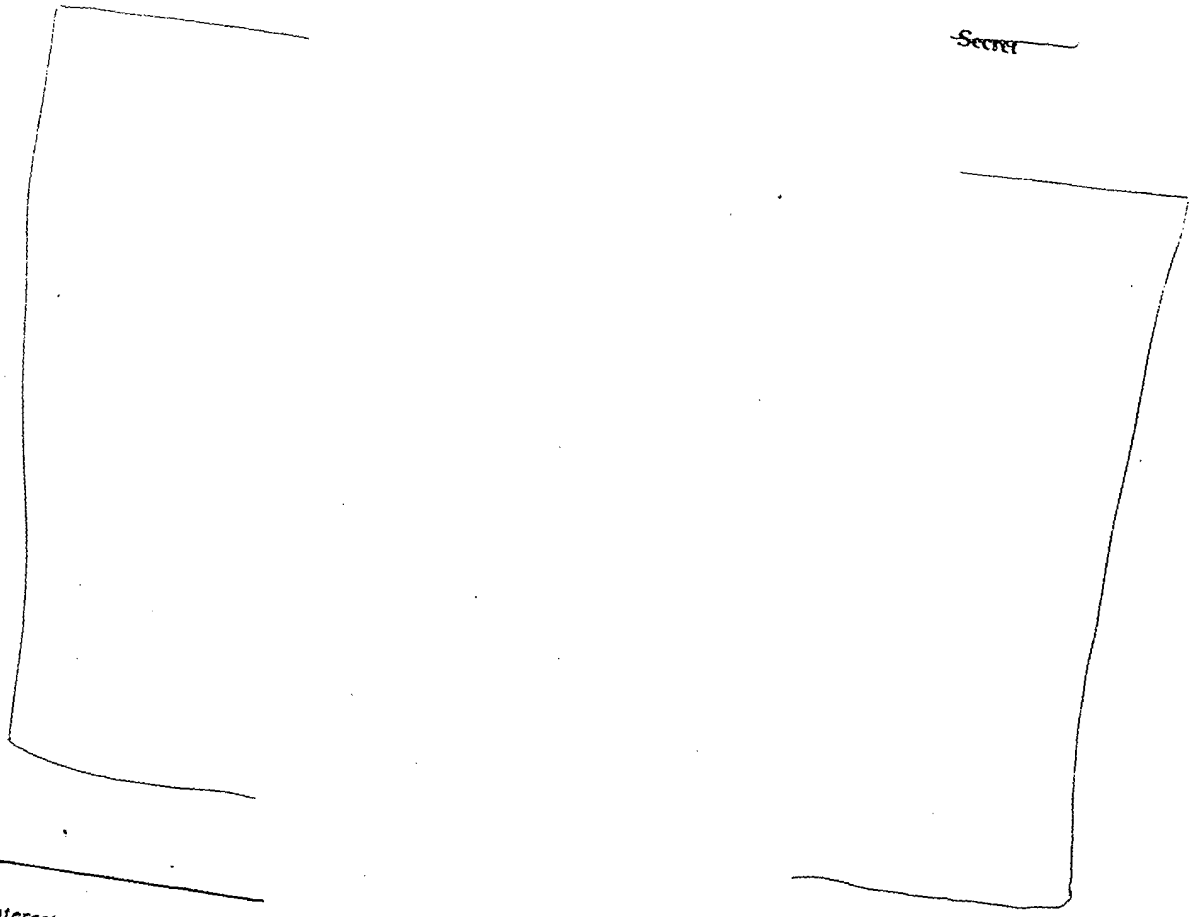
Luk'yanov, as head of the party's General Department, works closely with Gorbachev. Several Soviet sources identify him as a Gorbachev supporter, but one says he has ties to Ligachev. Luk'yanov has written enthusiastically on self-government and the need to democratize the electoral process at the enterprise level. His background suggests that he will play a key role in legal and electoral reform, and his appearances since his promotion suggest that his portfolio will also include security and defense issues. [illegible] Luk'yanov would be involved in all of these areas and that he is likely to be advanced soon to the Politburo. The appointments of



Luk'yanov and Slyun'kov to the Secretariat increase its number to 12—the largest it has been in years—and makes it possible that some of its members could be moved to other posts as needed by Gorbachev.

The retirement of Kunayev and promotion of Slyun'kov leaves Ukrainian party chief Shcherbitskiy as the only republic party leader in the Politburo. Private comments by Soviet officials, as well as continuing criticism of the Ukraine in the central press, indicates that Gorbachev has been trying to undermine Shcherbitskiy. The violent reaction to the removal of Kunayev in Alma-Ata, however, may force Gorbachev to stay his hand against Shcherbitskiy until he has carefully prepared the groundwork in the Ukrainian party for his removal

Regional representation in the Politburo has declined steadily since 1982, when there were six republic leaders holding either full or candidate membership. Several non-Russians serving in positions in Moscow, three of whom formerly headed republic parties, are on the Politburo, but they in no sense represent the



interests of the republics where they once served. By allowing non-Russians to achieve top-level positions in the center while denying republic leaders seats on the Politburo, Moscow is sending a signal to ethnic elites that the regime is according career opportunities to individual non-Russians but is determined to prevent republic party organizations from gaining the degree of de facto power they enjoyed under Brezhnev

The Road Ahead

While the plenum revealed the limits of Gorbachev's power, it also made clear that he will—and, in fact, must—continue to push for changes in policies and personnel. Gorbachev is now clearly out ahead of most of the Politburo and Central Committee in his reform agenda. He knows that he is polarizing the party and is aware that the stakes are high in his struggle to shake up the system. In his plenum speech, he acknowledged that many think he is trying to make "too sharp a turn" in policy and referred to unnamed opponents of his proposals. But he is openly tying his political fate to the success of his policies. At a postplenum meeting with media officials, Gorbachev hinted that if the plenum had rejected his reform program he would have resigned, saying that he would not want to continue working under those conditions.

The repeated postponements of the plenum, its failure to give Gorbachev all he wanted, and comments by [redacted] all suggest that some of the opposition to his program lies in the Politburo. The accounts of the plenun[redacted] indicate that

these differences are over specific policy issues, not Gorbachev's leadership. Most of the Politburo appears to agree on the need for new policy directions and changes in personnel, but there are clearly differences over specifics even among those members who attained their positions under Gorbachev. The General Secretary appeared to be alluding to this when he complained that, even in the Politburo, Secretariat, and Council of Ministers, "we have to revert to questions over and over again."

Since the plenum [redacted] tensions in the lea[redacted]

[redacted] Gorbachev is now embroiled in a serious struggle with opponents of his economic and political reforms. Writing in a Soviet weekly, Aleksandr Bovin, a well-connected Soviet commentator, described the division in the party between "Soviet socialist conservatives" who are afraid of openness and resisting change and those supporting Gorbachev's program. He said that the conservatives have "not lost hope" of reversing the changes, pointing out that they were successful in undermining the reforms introduced at the 20th Party Congress by Khrushchev and in Kosygin's economic reforms in 1965.

Gorbachev's greatest problem in the Politburo may come from Second Secretary Ligachev. Although Ligachev appears to be generally supportive of Gorbachev's policies, there were increasing signs of strain between them during the period before the plenum. In addition to the report that Gorbachev rejected Ligachev's draft of the plenum speech, there were indications of differences between them over secret voting, mandatory retirement, and interrepublic rotations of cadres. While Ligachev is not challenging Gorbachev directly, by taking a more cautious stance on the controversial issues raised at the plenum he is positioning himself as the logical alternative as party leader should opposition to Gorbachev mount.[redacted] Ligachev is now "very strong" and in a good position to succeed Gorbachev should he step aside or resign

The resistance to Gorbachev appears to be stronger among ordinary Central Committee members than among his Politburo colleagues. These members are undoubtedly strengthened by the knowledge that there are reservations about Gorbachev's policies within the Politburo itself. There has been less turnover in the Central Committee than in the Politburo. Moreover, its members are likely to feel particularly threatened by the prospect of forced retirements or having to stand in contested elections.[redacted] claimed that Gorbachev is "losing the party" as a result of his bold policies and that much of the Central Committee, perhaps a majority, opposes his restructuring efforts.

There are a number of specific groups that see Gorbachev's program either as a threat to their personal interests or to the interests of the regime itself. Those who may believe they have little to lose in opposing him include:

- Many regional leaders that have developed strong local patronage networks.
- Ministerial officials and enterprise managers used to the old way of operating and fearful of the new standards being applied.
- Party and state officials engaged in corrupt activities and fearing exposure.
- Party conservatives fearing that Gorbachev's untested reforms may unravel the foundations of party rule and wanting to nip them in the bud.
- Some police officials wary that Gorbachev's reforms would make it more difficult for them to deal with internal security problems.
- Many Russian elites traditionally fearing that any significant liberalization would stimulate separatist strivings by ethnic minorities in the USSR or encourage reform movements in Eastern Europe that could challenge Soviet domination.

- Military officers concerned that Gorbachev's efforts to hold down the growth of defense spending will adversely affect military equities and national security alike.

Arrayed against these pockets of resistance, however, in all institutions at all levels of the system are people embarrassed by the ineptitude of Gorbachev's predecessors and eager to see the beginning of a reform effort they regard as long overdue. Moreover, many younger ambitious officials clearly view enthusiastic support of Gorbachev's program as the best way to advance their careers.

Gorbachev does have a strong mandate for change, but he will need to ensure that tight control is maintained over the changes he wants to introduce to prevent "democratization" from getting out of hand. Conservatives clearly fear that this will be a difficult process to control and that the measures Gorbachev is proposing could eventually lead to a questioning of the legitimacy of the regime and ultimately to a political crisis—as happened when reforms were undertaken in 1956 in Hungary, in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, and in 1980-81 in Poland. To allay such concerns, Gorbachev will need to demonstrate that he can tightly manage the "democratization" process and nip in the bud any of the following potential developments that would indicate "democratization" is getting out of control:

- The central leadership loses control over some elections and the "wrong" candidates win.
- Workers use their increased rights to demand unacceptable concessions from management and begin to act like Western trade unions.
- The release of dissidents encourages more antiregime activities and demonstrations for further concessions become widespread.

Gorbachev does not appear to face any immediate threat. [redacted] who claimed a power struggle is now going on in the Kremlin and viewed Gorbachev's bold moves at the plenum as a sign of desperation, said it will take another three or four years before it will be clear if Gorbachev will prevail. Gorbachev also appears to be working on a similar time frame, commenting during his February visit to the Baltic that the next two or three years will be critical for his program

By promising so much, however, Gorbachev has made his political survival dependent on his ability to deliver—at a minimum, significant economic progress within the framework of continued political stability and at least a modicum of systemic reform to maintain his and the regime's credibility. His message at the plenum—that there is "no other choice" but to march ahead since "we do not have anywhere to retreat to"—is true for him personally if not for the USSR. Although he does not have to succeed in achieving any of his goals overnight, to maintain his political momentum he needs to:

- Most important, hold the party conference he proposed in 1988.
- Get approval of measures that facilitate cadre turnover and change procedures for selecting officials.
- Hold the next plenum on economic reform in June, as he promised, and achieve specific results that advance his agenda.
- Promote his allies—particularly Yel'tsin—to the Politburo.
- Replace Ukrainian party boss Shcherbitskiy, having mounted a campaign to get rid of him.